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Rajiv Gandhi Twisting Facts To Hide His Own Failures On Punjab

Akalis Are Always Willing For An Honourable Settlement

In a bid to find alibis for his failure to settle the Punjab problem with expedition, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi has embarked upon the policy of twisting facts and uttering untruths, thereby fastening the entire blame onto Akali shoulders, though the whiplash should be deservedly directed at his government.

In an interview with London's Independent Television on July 10, he said the Punjab problem "started off with the Morcha organised by the Akali Dal and this would not end if the government gave further unilateral concessions".

The last Morcha was launched in August 1982. But the Punjab problem has existed ever since 1947 when the Congress rulers of India threw into the dustbin the solemn assurances they had given to the Sikhs and on the basis of which Sikhs had cast their lot with India.

To quote just two instances :

Though all laws made for Hindus are automatically made applicable to Sikhs, yet Sikh scheduled castes were denied the concessions given to their Hindu counterparts. And when the map of India was redrawn on linguistic basis in 1957, a Punjabi-speaking state was not created just to spite Sikhs.

To make government accept these demands, Akalis had to mount several massive Morchas. And when a Punjabi Suba was eventually conceded in 1966, every nerve was strained to make it a lame and truncated one. Many Punjabi-speaking areas were left out. Its capital, Chandigarh, was converted into a union territory, though everywhere else the capital always remained with the parent state.

In January 1971 Prime Minister Indira Gandhi announced that Chandigarh would be merged with Punjab "within five years". This was done only after Sant Fateh Singh had undertaken a fast which was to culminate in self-immolation. These "five years" ended in 1976 and yet Chandigarh has been kept away from Punjab.

When Bombay city remained with Maharashtra and Madras city stayed with present Tamil Nadu, no areas were given, as "compensation", to Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh respectively. Then why should Abohar-Fazilka belt be handed over to Haryana as "compensation" ? And that also by creating a one-mile-wide and 100-mile-long corridor through Punjab and Rajasthan territories to make it contiguous with Haryana.

(*Continued on last page*)

Allegations Of Corruption Levelled Against Bhajan Lal In 42-Page Memorandum

Commission Of Inquiry Demanded For Probe

Haryana Chief Minister Bhajan Lal, who strutted about as a sorcerer of new brand of political games replete with manipulations and defections, has been caught in cobwebs of his own making. And it will be very difficult, if not wellnigh impossible, for him to extricate himself from them.

A 42-page memorandum has been submitted to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, which has been signed by 22 members of parliament belonging to various political parties and 21 Haryana MLAs.

It is a catalogue of specific cases of corruption, nepotism and all kinds of allied misdeeds: bending and breaking of laws and rules, financial irregularities, foreign exchange manipulations, land grab, bogus deals, misuse of official subsidies and concessions, grant of extraordinary official favours and much else —all in aid of his son-in-law, Mr Anoop Bishnoi, and his family, sundry nephews, other relatives, and, of course, himself.

Mr Bishnoi's family has come to own 25 industrial units, worth crores of rupees, in a short span of three years. It is a typical story of rags to riches.

Mr Bhajan Lal was never considered an epitome of personal integrity or political probity. The present allegations may well add up only to the proverbial tip of the iceberg. That is why the memorandum insists that a detailed and searching inquiry would bring to light "scandals of unprecedented magnitude".

Mr Gandhi has announced that if the charges against the Haryana chief minister are substantiated, the government would proceed against him. Similar assurances were given to Lok Dal President Charan Singh who had earlier led the deputation to the prime minister.

The Santhanam Committee had recommended that "specific allegations of corruption should be promptly investigated by an agency whose findings shall be respected."

In this case, the allegations are supported by details from official records. Thus, they are specific and, have not been made in a huff.

Mr Gandhi and Mr Bhajan Lal met on July 8 and very probably the latter's comments have been sought. These should be available within the next few weeks but not months. And then matter should be left to the commission of inquiry.

It would be tragic if the prime minister views the issue through partisan blinkers. It would be also utterly wrong for him to treat the demand for a probe as an opposition gimmick. The ball is squarely in Mr Gandhi's court.

Eminent Jurist, Mr. V.M. Tarkunde Says—

'New Ordinances Not Going To Help Solve The Problem'

The People's Union for Civil Liberties last week released a revised version of their booklet; 'Black Laws', which includes the latest legislation. The booklet contains the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, 1985, the National Security (Second Amendment) Ordinance 1984 and Terrorist Affected Areas (Special Courts) Ordinance of 1984.

Releasing the booklet, the eminent jurist, Mr V.M. Tarkunde, said the new ordinances were not going to help solve the problem. On the countrary, it would increase terrorism and the new laws in the hands of the people would be ineffective due to political interference.

Mr Tarkunde pointed out two objectionable features in the National Security Amendment Ordinance No. 5. According to him, "A detenu arrested under a law of preventive detention finds it virtually impossible to challenge his detention by filing a habeas corpus petition till the grounds of detention are communicated to him. Section 8 of the National Security Act (before its amendment) provided that the grounds of detention should be communicated to the detenu as soon as may be, but ordinarily not later than five days and in exceptional circumstances and for reasons to be recorded in writing, not later than 10 days from the date of detention."

He pointed out that the Supreme Court observed in a decision that the grounds of detention should be available when the detention order is issued and should normally be served along with the detention order.

Mr Tarkunde said that after the amendment a detenu may remain in jail for 15 days without knowing why he is detained and without having any effective remedy against the detention.

The unamended Act provided that the case of a detenu could be referred to the advisory board within three weeks of his detention and the board must submit its report within seven weeks of detention. Under the amended ordinance, the case of a person could be submitted to the board within four months and two weeks of detention and the board could submit its report within five months and three weeks of detention. This meant that a detenu would undergo imprisonment for nearly six months even if his detention was eventually found to be utterly unjustified, Mr Tarkunde said.

Ordinance No. 6, according to Mr Tarkunde, was regarding introducing of two amendments which had already been effected in the COFEPOSA, which had been challenged before the Supreme Court, the judgment for which was still awaited.

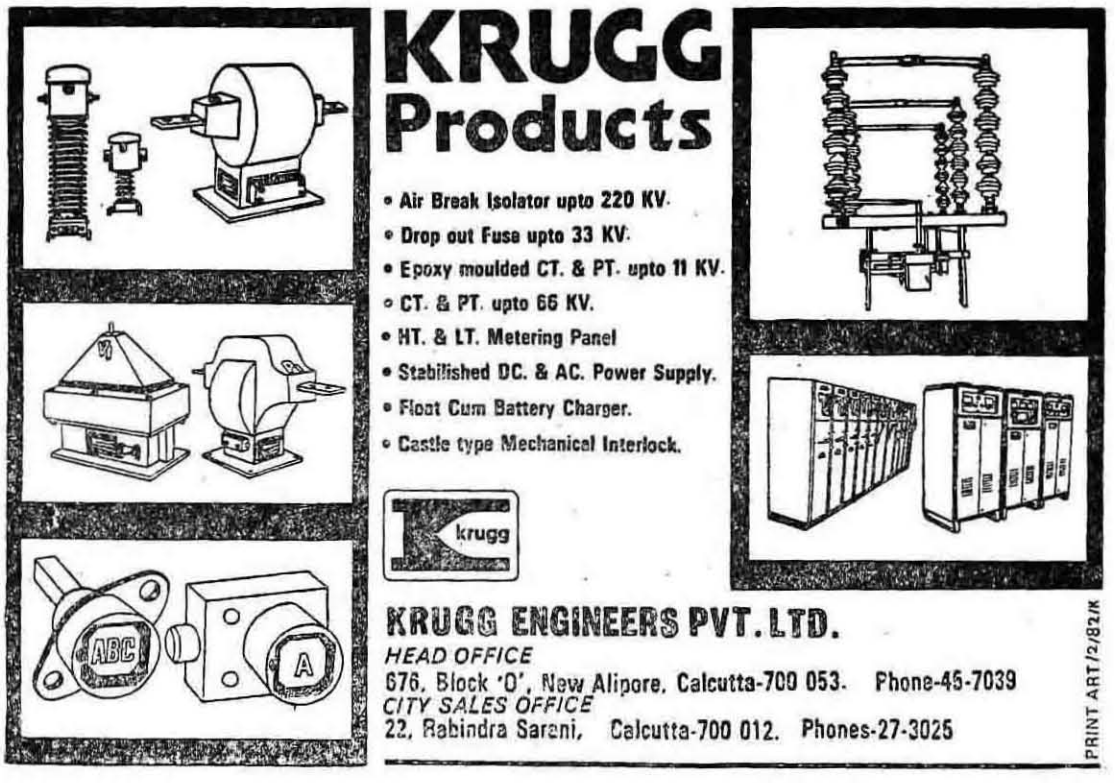
He said that one amendment provided that if a detention order was based on several grounds, it would be assumed to have been made separately on each ground so that the order of detention would be valid even if one of the several grounds was not invalid. This, he said, would make it virtually impossible for the detenu to challenge his detention by pointing out that many of the grounds on which he was detained were invalid.

The second amendment laid down that on the revocation or expiry of detention order, another detention order could be issued even if no fresh facts had arisen, provided that the period of detention did not exceed 12 months. He said that these amendments were prima facie invalid and were liable to be challenged as unconstitutional and were a serious encroachment on personal freedom.

Under the Terrorist Affected Areas (Special Courts) Ordinance No. 9, the definition of terrorist was too wide and it could be applied to any person who causes "disruption of services or means of communications essential to the community" for coercing or overawing the Government. He said that under this a body of workers going on strike in the Railways could be called terrorists. Tne main purpose was to set up special courts for speedy trials of certain offences in terrorist-affected areas.

The detenu could also be produced before an executive magistrate appointed by the Government and the police remand could be obtained whenever desired as the magistrate could be amenable to executive influeuce. This also aimed at taking away the statutory bail.

In effect the ordinance provided that the normal rule would be jail and not bail, he said.



The Spokesman Weekly — Thirty Years Ago

July 13, 1955

THE PUNJAB TRAGEDY !

(An editorial)

What shall one say of the Punjab Government? The Chief Minister is never weary of brandding the Akalis as Communalists and that he has only recently confessed like Nehru that the Puujab Hindus and Congressmen were Communalists. Those who are rank Communalists themselves brazenly dub the Sikhs Communalists! Jagat Narain brands Kairon as a Communalist, because he wears the distinctive Sikh symbols! Musafir has been vehemently denouncing poor Akalis, without even once making the honest confession which even Sachar could not resist making.

May one ask Sardar Ujjal Singh and Sardar Harcharan Singh, Honourable Ministers of the Punjab Government if they sanctioned or do subscribe to what has been enacted at Amritsar, which Sardar Sant Singh calls Punjab Government's one day's hysteria? Sardar Sant Singh is over-indulgent to Punjab Government whose hysteria and want of statesmanship is chronic and perennial.

Even Sardar Kharak Singh feels distressed over the Amritsar happenings. The anguish of the Chief Khalsa Diwan is obvious and unmistakable. Sardar Ishar Singh Majhali has not remained unaffected. The Sikhs of all shades of thought have been stirred to their innermost depths. Patiala observed Hartal, the Amritsar Khalsa College and Sikh Schools demonstrated their resentment. The Sikhs will be shocked, wherever they are, in the Punjab, in all parts of India and across the seas. The Amritsar D.C. calls the operation successful! Yes, Dyer also called his operation successful and meritorious and boasted that he was out to create terror and frightfulness! The shadow of Jallianwala Bagh lengthened over India. Will the Amritsar tragedy be easily forgotten and forgiven?

Let those whose operation has been 'successful', pause and ponder. Do Sachar and Pant feel happy over it? We do not know. Will the 'operation' crush the Akalis' spirit and make them tame and submissive like pet dogs? The wrong-doer forgets the wrong done by him, not so the wronged. Is this the way to treat a section of Indians, while some one is staging his Panch Shila for global peace?

A THOUGHT FROM GURBANI

By remembering the Lord we obtain wealth,
mystical power, and the nine treasures :
By remembering the Lord we obtain
Divine knowledge, the gift of meditation and true wisdom.
—Guru Arjan Dev

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BIGGEST FAUX PAS

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi appears to have touched a hornet's nest with his views on the emergency at his July 7 press conference. He not only justified its imposition by his mother in 1975 but also declared that, despite his inclination not to resort to harsh measures, it would have to be imposed if the conditions of 10 years ago were created. It is possible that he was taken by surprise by the question and, therefore, his off-the-cuff response was influenced by his anxiety to assure the country, tormented by multiple conflicts and threats, that its unity and integrity would be protected at all costs. But instead of being reassured, the country has been plunged into unnecessary misgivings. Mrs Indira Gandhi herself had expressed regrets for the emergency and promised never again to repeat it.

In June 1975 there was no threat to India's unity and integrity. The only threat was to Mrs Gandhi's throne, as she had been unseated from Parliament and disqualified for six years in an election petition. It was merely to remain in power that she clamped the emergency on an unsuspecting nation and tried to rule with an iron hand, throwing thousands of protestors into jails, muzzling the press, trying to whip the judiciary into abject surrender and making nonsense of all democratic traditions and norms. Eventually, she paid a heavy price for this height of folly. During the January 1980 elections to Lok Sabha, not only she but also her heir-apparent son, Sanjay, and the majority of her central ministers were miserably defeated. Same would be Mr Rajiv Gandhi's fate if he ever and cling to power through means more foul than fair dared follow in his mother's footsteps. If he was merely trying to uphold 1975 decision on emergency as a devout son duty bound to defend his mother at all costs, even then he cannot be forgiven. He should have been bold enough to call the spade a spade.

Shiromani Akali Dal was the only party which launched a massive movement against the emergency during 1975-77. No wonder, Akalis have again risen up in arms against the prime minister's declaration. Leaders of BJP, Janta, CPM, and Lok Dal, in separate statements, have expressed their shock and have vowed to mobilise the people against these dictatorial trends. If Mr Gandhi's aim is to trample on people's liberty by imposing emergency, the latter would hit back by launching much more severe movement than in 1975. We have to remain on guard. The price of our freedom and democracy is eternal vigil. We should remember that though the emergency leadership is no more with us, the emergency mentality is still very much alive. If Mr Gandhi wants to cow down people and the opposition parties, he has disasterously failed. Rather, the reverse is true. They have been jolted into awakening and galvanised into action.

Akali Dal demands general amnesty for army deserters

The Shiromani Akali Dal has ignored the Centre's overtures for talks and has said the Government must "rectify its mistakes" leading to excesses against Sikhs, if it wanted to solve the Punjab problem.

The "mistakes" would be rectified if the Government accepted the party's demands—now increased to nine from seven—to normalise the situation in the state, Sant Harchand Singh Longowal, party president, Sardar G.S. Tohra, president of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Commitee, and Sardar Parkash Singh Badal, former chief minister, told a news conference at Anandpur Sahib this week.

The party decided to defer its action plan till August 20 after it elicited the rank and file's views at conferences throughout the state starting from August 1, Sant Longowal said.

Earlier, at its eight-hour conclave in the Takht Sri Kesgarh Sahib hall in Anandpur Sahib the party discussed the problems facing the Sikh community and laid down the nine pre-conditions for any meaningful talks for ending the Punjab impasse. A general amnesty for Sikh arrested throughout the country and to Army deserters was one of the main preconditions.

The meeting adopted nine resolutions reiterating its demands. In one of the resolutions the party cautioned the Government against "flouting" the supremacy of Akal Takht. A party spokesman later said it was in the context of Sardar Buta Singh's visit to gurdwaras after his excommunication from the Panth.

Through another resolution the meeting criticised a court for showing utter ignorance about Sikh traditions by summoning the Jathedar of Akal Takht to appear before it. The party demanded that the summons should be withdrawn.

It demanded general amnesty for Army deserters and withdrawal of cases pending against them. It urged the Government to reinstate deserters who had been dismissed from service.

The party reiterated its demand for the abolition of the Special courts and abrogation of "black laws" and general amnesty for all Akali and Sikh youths arrested in Punjab and elsewhere. It reiterated the demand for full compensation to victims of the November riots and for extension of the judicial probe into the riots to places outside Delhi also.

Expressing concern over the decision to disband 9 Sikh Regiment, the party urged the Government to reverse its decision. It demanded that, all former M.L.A.s should be removed from chairmanship of autonomous boards and corporations.

An Appeal To Renew Subscriptions

Spokesman Weekly should be enabled to serve Sikhs more

Once again we are forced to address this appeal to our subscribers to send in their subscriptions without delay.

It is directed more at those whose subscriptions expired on December 31, 1984 and needed renewal months ago.

It is also meant for those whose subscriptions have since expired or are about to expire within the next few weeks.

As all know, no journal can carry on without financial props. In our case, these comprise mainly subscriptions. Because we do not accept donations, and advertisements are not so many in coming.

Immediately after the Bluestar Operation in June last year, when the army invaded the Golden Temple and other historic gurdwaras in Punjab, there was a sudden spurt in demand for the Spokesman Weekly. Many Sikhs of prominence and Sikh organisations bought its copies in hundreds and distributed them among their friends and members. Now this enthusiasm has waned, and the plaudits showered on us for signal service to the community and its causes, in face of government fury and harassment, have been nearly forgotten.

Costs of production, postage, and newsprint have soared skyhigh. The postage for foreign subscribers, in particular, is back-breaking. They should wake up more than others. These facts adds to the urgency of our subscribers realising their duty and sending in their subscriptions on time. This is not asking for too much.

We pledge to continue our humble service to the Panth and its causes. And we are sure our readers would like to strengthen our hands in this noble mission. We are asking for money legitimately due to us and not doles. We shall be indebted if our subscribers take this appeal with the seriousness it deserves.

Concept of 'Five' in Sikhism

By : Sardar Mehar van Singh, Singapore

Singapore is a confluence for the world's races and religions. We have frequent opportunities of coming in close contact with differing ideologies. Once I was invited to address a close-knit group of Israelis. Several of them pointed out that 'five' appeared to be the most significant numeral in Sikhism, though I was not unduly conscious of the fact.

Obviously they had taken careful note of the many historical matters and established Sikh practices:

(a) We consider all our Gurus as one in ten different garbs. However, the greatest impact was made by the fifth Guru, Arjan. He consolidated the Gurbani and established the Harimandar at Amritsar. He become the Crown of the long line of Sikh Martyrs.

(b) The next greatest impact came at the hands of the tenth Guru, Gobind Rai, which is the second fifth. He established the Khalsa of Saint-Soldiers. This act charged the course of Indian history.

(c) Guru Gobind Singh called for Five Beloved out of a congregation of thousands at Anandpur, not four nor six. Sikh history has on record that the five exercised great authority. They initiated the Tenth Guru into Gobind Singh becoming, thus, his masters.

(d) Guru Gobind Singh recited and created the precedent of reciting five compositions while creating the Amrit. He was free to recite as much as he desired from the many chapters of the Granth.

(e) Guru Gobind Singh made it mandatory the wearing of five Kakars. He could have made it four or six. Senior Sikhs believe that originally there were five prohibitions, including one against social associations with *kurî-mar* and *narî-mar*.

(f) Guru Gobind Singh presented five arrows to Banda Singh Bahadur when commissioning the latter to continue the armed struggle against the tyrannical rulers.

(g) The Guru usually offered five paisas to his successor along with the traditional coconut followed by five circumambulations around his successor.

(h) The use of sawa rupaya, making five quarters of the monetary unit, has prevailed since we have known offerings in Sikhism. Multiples of five: 25, 125, 250 etc. for offerings are recognised measures.

(i) Guru Gobind Singh said "sawa-lakh se ek laraun, tabae Gobind Singh nam kahaun", obviously five quarters of a lakh. It would have mattered little if he had said 'one' lakh. The meter of the couplet would not have upset.

(j) The practice has been established to recite the first five stanzas of Anand Sahib, followed by the last, at the close of all Sikh religious ceremonials.

(k) Repeated recitation of the first five stanzas of the Japji has long been accepted as a pious act not only for the illiterate but also among well educated Sikhs. Congregational commencement of Sahaj Path is done by reading the first five stanzas of Japji.

(l) The Sikh mode of panchangi namaskar replaced the traditional dandaut.

(m) The commonly called 'Krah parshad' is called by Sikh theologians 'Panchamrit'.

(n) The first commonly known pothi is the panj granthi, and the next important pothi is the das Granthi.

(o) The Gurmukhi Script consists of seven lines, each of five letters arranged according to five different combinations in positions of tongue, lips, teeth and throat sounds. Five of the lines are systematically arranged similar phonetics, the two lines of miscellaneous sounds being placed first and last (not interspersed). There are ten vowel sounds, five short and five long.

(p) "In 1700 Guru Gobind Singh sent five eminent Sikhs under the leadership of Diwan Bhai Mani Singh" to "reorganise the Khalsa Army under five dals which remained the nucleus of the Sikh army".

(q) Diwan Mati Das, Bhai Dayal Das, Bhai Sati Das and the High Priest Bhai Gurdita (making five) accompanied Guru Tegh Bahadur to Delhi to confront the authorities before his martyrdom.

Ever since my attention has been drawn to it I have been fascinated by the ideas of Sikhism associated in fives. Japji and other compositions have so many instances. The first to strike the mind is :

Panch parwan, Panch pardhan,
Panche paveh dargeh maan,
Panche sohe dar rajaan,
Pancha ka gur ek dhian.

"Panch" is interpreted as leader in panchait, sarpanch, etc. It was usual for the panchait to be of five persons. Guru Gobind Singh formed the first panchait of the five beloved in 1699. The word 'panch' is used for five in common language. Hence the Sikh thought "Panjan wich Parmesar". Significantly in the above quoted line the Guru gives five notes on the importance of 'Panch'.

Consider the following group of thoughts, all associated in fives :

(a) *Dharam khand, gian khand, saram khand, karam khand* and *sach khand.*

(b) *Jap, tap, sanjam, dharam* and *sewa*

(c) *Surat, mat, man, budh* and *sudh.*

(d) *Tirath, tap, daya, dat* and *daan.*

(e) *Kaam, krodh, lobh, moh* and *hankar* (Five sins).

(f) *Sat, santokh, daya, dharam* and *dhiraj* (five virtues).

(g) *Pawan* (Guru), *pani* (*pita*), (*mata*) *dharat mohat, diwas* and *raat* (*daee* and *daya*).

(h) *Ann, pani, baisantar, loon* and *ghirat.*

(i) *Bhagat, sant, saadh, gurmukh* and *Sikh.*

(j) *Peer, paigambar, sheik, musaik* and *aulia.*

(k) *Karam, dharam, nem, bart* and *puja.*

(l) *Maat, pita, bhai, soot* and *banta.*

(m) *Arth, dharam, kaam, mokh* and *prem.*

(n) *Att sunder, kuleen, chatar mukhgiani* and *dhanwant.*

(o) *Meet, sajan, soot, bandhap* and *bhai.*

A Sikh scholar was enraged because in the quotation 'panch parwan, panch pardhan. . .' I interpreted 'panch' as 'five'. I had also wrongly included in my list of 'fivers' one—'andaj, jeraj, utbhuj, setaj and khan'—which I have now excluded. Against that one, I noted at random seven more to make fourteen.

Far from shaking me out of associating five with the Takhts by enumerating other associations of ideas in fours and threes, he reconfirmed my idea. Sikhs of the region always believed and still believe that Guru Gobind Singh established a Takht at Talwandi Sabo (Damdama Sahib). He stayed there and exercised his authority for several months, before proceeding to Nander, there to establish the last Takht.

What is wrong with a layman advancing the hypothesis that Guru Gobind Singh thought of and established five Takhts in line with his numerous other past actions? At what stage of the turbulent history some factions of Sikhs ceased to recognise as Takht at Talwandi Sabo is not clear.

References to fives, without naming them, are numerous:

(a) *Panch tat ko tan rachio janio chatar sujan.*

(b) *Panch pachis moh mad matsar.*

(c) *Waje panch sabad tit ghar subhage.*

(d) *Panch doot tudh was kite.*

(e) *Mirg, meen, bhring, patang, kunchar ek dokh binas, Panch dokh asadh je meh taki ketak bat.*

(f) *Panch manae, panch rusae, arth so granth so panch parwana.*

I am a layman and I have neither time nor facility for research. Perhaps scholars can collect many more instances from the Gurbani, where 'five' are specifically enumerated, while the mention of 'five' is too numerous.

According to Sikh theologians the universe, as also the human form (*panj bhutak sarir*), was created by God in five mahan tatt (great elements), each of which represents five prakirtian (qualities in human beings) as follows:

I *AKAS*—the firmament: *lobh, moh, hankar, dukh* and *preet.*

II *PAWAN*—the air: *bal, daurna, pasarna, sankochaha* and *wadhana.*

III *AGNI*—the energy: *nind, kranti, bhukh, pias* and *alas.*

IV *JAL*—the water: *lahoo, pasina, pit, kaf* and *viraj.*

V *PRITHAVI*—the earth : *cham, hadd, mas, nari* and *rom.*

The human being has five karam indre (organs of action): mouth for eating and drinking, hands for working, feet for movement, genitals for procreation and anus for excretion.

The normal human being has five gian indre (organs of perception for the mind):—ears for hearing, skin for touch, tongue for taste, eyes for vision and nose for smelling. Any person missing any one of these senses suffers a major impairment. The sixth sense is a rare phenomenon.

The human hand has five fingers and the human foot has five toes. A person with four/six fingers or toes is considered a freak.

Sikh theology considers life to be panj kosh (elements for life): *anamae* (food), *pranmae* (breath), *manomae* (heart), *wigianmae* (understanding) and *anandmae* (satisfaction).

Sikh theologians advocate five virtuous habits (panj *updesh*), basing their thoughts upon the gurbani:—*Hâk halal di kamai* (honest labour), *maya di yog warton* (proper use of produce of labour), *parmatama sarb viapi* (God is in all beings), *sach di sada jai* (truth always prevails), and *parmatama nun sada yad rakhna* (Ever remember God).

WHY SIKHS FEEL ALIENATED ?

State Terrorism And Intemperate Postures

Our democratic setup has been reduced to shambles and democratic norms made to take flight by the powers-that-are. In the name of fighting terrorism by a few, the government has unleashed state terrorism and criminalised politics. Every bearded Sikh with a turban on is looked upon with suspicion and his loyalty to the country doubted. Formerly every Sikh was considered an Akali. Now every Sikh is labelled as a "terrorist". Whenever any act of violence takes place, it is ascribed to "Sikh terrorists", though it might be the handiwork of others, and the entire Sikh community is treated as an offender. But the same yardstick is not applied when any Hindu is involved. For instance, after the arrest of Coomar Narain and his gang, none shouted about them as "Hindu spies" and no one branded the entire Hindu community as "a bunch of traitors".

Sikhs are nowadays a despised and derided lot. In dealing with them, the government has displayed absolute disdain for civil liberties and human rights. Any action against them is hailed as commendable firmness while any protest by Sikhs against this zulum is shouted down as "rebellion" and "sedition". Whenever the government releases a handful of Sikhs held on false charges or concedes one or two Sikh demands, it is eulogised as "concessions". If the Akalis do not feel satisfied, they are accused of intransigence. In this article, which appeared in 'The Illustrated Weekly', Madhu Kishwar, the well known feminist, has laid bare the government game.

It is a textbook commonplace that only barbaric and tyrannical regimes use torture to extract confessions. Modern historians write of the Inquisition and of the Roman Empire's dictum that slaves only tell the truth under torture, as if these were phenomena of a savage and primitive past. We pride ourselves on the rule of law and the due process of law that prevail in our 'enlightened' polity, of which the fundamental principle is that a person is presumed innocent until proved guilty.

How is it, then, that no one blinks an eyelid when suspected extremists are tortured and killed in police custody, with the approval of the judiciary ? Newspapers of May 14, 1985, reported that of the three suspects arrested from the house of a lawyer in West Patel Nagar, one died in police custody before he could be produced in court. The Lohia hospital recorded serious injuries all over his body and the report says he had 'apparently been tortured to death'. The police explanation for not producing him in the court was that he was 'refusing food and water'. Another version was that he had an 'encounter'—although earlier the same day, he had been brought to hospital and received treatment for minor injuries received during the scuffle. He came to hospital walking and left walking, at that time. But at 4.15 pm he was brought there, dead. What 'encounter' could have taken place while he was in police custody ?

The other two suspects were produced in court in 'an apparently critical condition'. They were unable to stand without support and one, an elderly man, had to be carried part of the way. He collapsed every time the police released their hold of him.

Though the fact of torture—which is completely illegal and no part of the duty or right of the police to inflict—was visible to anyone, the judge, nonetheless, saw fit to remand the suspects to police custody for 14 days, saying that they did not deserve any leniency as by their act they had endagered the peace of the country. In view of the fact that one of them had died in police custody in the course of a few hours, this order amounted to condoning torture even to the point of death without seeing fit to make a comment or enquire into the circumstances of the death.

An important point which the judge seems to have overlooked is that if these men are thus illegally killed by the police, valuable evidence will be lost and there will be no way of ascertaining the truth. Further, the judge's comments are as good as pronouncing people guilty before investigation according to legal process. If police beatings are the only way available to us to ascertain truth, then why waste so much money on the paraphernalia of crime investigation and detection ?

Or why, for that matter, bring people to trial ? For all practical purposes, we seem to be reverting to the methods of the Inquisition, based on the unfounded belief that torture extracts truth. In fact, torture is much more likely to force the victim to endorse the torturer's preconceived version of the events. If the victim is subsequently killed, as one suspect has been, then we will be forced to believe whatever version the police choose to give us—and they are by no means renowned for their veracity.

Thus, the functioning of the police as squad of torturers and executioners, who may completely bypass the legal process, is not only a violation of the human rights of the victims, it is also an infringement of all the citizens' right to know.

Even before these arrests, the media had ascribed the bomb blasts to 'Sikh extremists' without a shred of evidence. On what basis can we be so sure that these are not agents provocateur of some communalist group out to inflame hatred against Sikhs ? It is significant that no Sikh group has so far claimed to be responsible for the blasts. Further, terrorism is itself a political, not a religious, 'ism'. Why should these terrorists be termed 'Sikhs' when spies like Coomar Narain and others are not termed 'Hindus' ?

The government while monotonously repeating phrases like 'national unity and integrity' is, in fact, making a scapegoat of an entire community. Today, all Sikhs are being held accountable for the doings of any one Sikh or small handful of Sikhs. Every time Jagjit Singh Chohan or Talwandi says or does something irresponsible, the entire Sikh community is treated as an offender. The situation has deteriorated to a point where any bearded man in a turban is looked upon with suspicion, and any excesses committed by government functionaries against Sikhs are treated as legitimate.

Even more secular minded Hindus tend to demand that Sikhs issue public statements dissociating themselves from the doings of Bhindranwale's followers. Yet none of these Hindus consider themselves bound publicly to disown the 'anti-national' or criminal doings of the other Hindus. When Coomar Narain and others were apprehended, it never even remotely occurred to anyone that this was an indication of the anti-national character of Hindus in general, therefore, other Hindus should disown the offenders or that temple priests should issue statements saying that Hindus are not in favour of espionage.

Sikhs and Muslims, because they are minorities, are treated as a separate species, all tarred with the same brush. That these attitudes have become predominant in the media, shows how far the media view of the world is in fact the majority community view. Even though there is ample proof that Bhindranwale was originally propped up and encouraged by the Indira regime, it is the Akalis and the Sikhs, not the Congress(I), who are held responsible for his existence.

What is it that tortures and killings by the police do not arouse a fraction of the horror that the same acts by ordinary citizens do ? It is because we have implicitly come to accept that the same action, when performed by those in power, is legitimate but that it becomes illegitimate and illegal when performed by an ordinary citizen or a group of citizens. Thus, the use of armed force, killing and torture are considered appropriate governmental methods of compelling people to obey government orders, but if citizens use the same methods on a much smaller scale, they are condemned as terrorists and anti-national elements. Thereafter, any method used by the government to quell them are considered justifiable.

So inured have we become over the years to this double standard, that it rarely occurs to us to wonder whether torture and murder, when committed by a uniformed man in fulfilment of orders from above, are any more humane and just then when

Entire community considered offender for actions of a few

committed by a man on his own responsibility. Even to raise such a question is to lay oneself open to accusations of being anti-national.

It is a well-known fact, that the November 1984 anti-Sikh riots were organised and masterminded by the ruling party and governmental high ups. A number of eyewitnesses had testified in print to the leadership and participation of these men in the violence. In any murder case, the existence of such evidence would ordinarily lead to immediate arrest of the accused. However, in this case, mass murder, arson, loot, rape, became, as it were, 'noncognizable' offences, merely because those in power chose not to take cognizance of them.

For nearly six months, a vast range of individual citizens, groups and organisations were reduced to pleading for an enquiry from the very set of persons who were the prime suspects. But as long as those in power chose to treat the massacre as a 'dead issue' all pleas, petitions to courts, agitations were of no avail. When mounting national and international pressure finally compelled the government to establish an enquiry, the timing of it was deliberately designed to make it appear as a gesture of great generosity rather than a shamefully belated act of justice.

The enquiry was announced on the eve of the Akali meet, and labelled by government a 'concession to Akalis'.

Television and radio, being a government monopoly, inevitably projected this distortion of facts. So deep-rooted is the habit of servility that large sections of the national press also picked up the term without question and repeated ad nauseam that this 'concession to Akalis' was a proof of the government's conciliatory attitude. Some newspapers, for example, *The Times of India* in an editorial, went so far as to criticise it as a 'premature concession'. An obnoxious cartoon in the same newspaper showed the prime minister and the home minister despatching a truckload of gifts and bouquets of the Akalis with the comment: 'That will teach them a lesson to behave'. Considering how widely the phrase 'teach them a lesson' has been used to justify the November violence, it would appear that the cartoonist was advocating not merely a legitimation but even a repetition of that violence.

How is it that the setting up of an enquiry can be projected as a concession to Akalis ? When a person is murdered, the State has a duty to undertake prosecution. Similarly, the setting up of an enquiry into any large scale loss of life or limb is now an established convention. In neither case is the State action considered a favour to the victims or their relatives. But in this instance, the government is seeking to convince people that Sikh lives are the concern only of Akalis and Sikhs, not of others. By so doing, the government is in fact virtually dividing people into different nations, by dividing their hearts and minds, which is far more real a schism than that created by any geographical boundary.

The demand for an enquiry was not made by the Akalis alone. And its purpose is not to do justice to Sikhs alone. Every Indian has the right to know who the guilty were and every Indian has an interest in seeing them brought to book. This is not only because violence committed on a fellow human being should grieve each one of us, but also because what happened to the Sikhs on the pretext of their religion can easily happen tomorrow to any other group of citizens on the same or any other pretext—of language, race, region. Once the arbitrary use of brute force and the stirring up of hatred against a selected group is sanctioned in our polity by public acquiescence, tacit or open, there is no knowing in which direction it may turn.

Yet, unfortunately, scarcely any protest has been voiced against the labelling of the enquiry as a 'concession to Akalis'. Our habitual acceptance of the government view of its doings and misdoings is partly because the government has perfected the technique of distracting attention from the real issues in any agitation. This technique consists of a certain pattern that is observable in most recent agitations, including small ones like those launched by nurses or teachers, but is blatantly evident in the case of widespread agitations such as those in Punjab and Assam.

In the first stage, the agitators present a set of demands, some of which the government concedes in theory, while on others it dilly dallies. Even the demands that have been conceded are not implemented but postponed indefinitely. The agitators' impatience builds up. Government foments violence by dividing the agitators between themselves, and then unleashes repression through police, army, censorship, imposition of bans. The focus of the agitation shifts and the main demand becomes an end to repression. Government, after more delay, withdraws a few of the repressive measures. This is made out to be an act of great magnanimity. Not a single one the original issues is resolved but the agitators are expected to show their gratitude by withdrawing the whole agitation. If they do not, they are termed rigid, separatist, extremist, and antinational.

Each one of the so-called concessions recently made—the setting up of an enquiry, withdrawal of ban on AISSF and release of some detenus—is nothing but the withdrawal of a repressive measure. Yet the Akalis are made to appear highly unreasonable if they ask for a withdrawal of other repressive measures such as the overwhelming army presence in Punjab, or the acceptance of their original demands, most of which government had, at different points, coneeded in principle.

Terrorism is itself a political, not a religious, 'ism'. Why should these terrorists be termed 'Sikhs' when spies and others are not termed "Hindus" ?

A typical instance of this kind of thinking was a *Times of India*, report (April 16) accusing the Akalis of 'trying to persuade the community that much more than has been conceded can be extracted from this government if only they continue to adopt a 'tough and belligerent posture'. Here, the use of emotive adjectives like 'tough and belligerent' to describe the Akalis but not the government furthers the impression that the investigation of a massacre is a great boon bestowed upon the victims.

Interestingly, the word 'tough' when used by those in power to describe themselves, suddenly acquires the connotation of commendable firmness. Thus, Rajiv Gandhi, at the inaugural session of the Congress centenary celebrations, was loudly cheered when he said: "...the tone of love can toughen and the soft hand can become hard." His speech contained a barely veiled threat: "We can do anything to solve the Punjab problem." One has only to recall November 1984 to absorb the full horror of that 'anything'.

We would like to make it clear that we have no intention of justifying acts of violence and terrorism committed by supporters of Bhindranwale. But it seems to us that violence and terror unleashed by the government is in no way more justifiable. When so-called terrorists commit violence on innocent people, they can be apprehended, prosecuted or, on the other hand, killed off in 'encounters'. In other words, their activities can be curbed. But when the powers-that-be themselves perpetrate violence and injustice on innocent people on a much larger scale, where are the victims to turn for redress? To whom are the government and its faceless functionaries accountable?

The Akalis are repeatedly asked to function 'within the framework of the Constitution' and in the interests of 'national integrity'. But it seems that these have become catchphrases used by the government to browbeat all forms of opposition into submission. Any criticism of government by Akalis is interpreted as antinational activity. *The Times of India* report earlier referred to, goes on to say: "Another piece of evidence contributing to the heightening of the attitude of confrontation is the strident criticism of government by Sant Harchand Singh Longowal, President Akali Dal (L) and Mr Jagdev Singh Talwandi, President, Akali Dal (T)." Clearly, the writer believes that criticism is itself confrontation and therefore deplorable. However, any amount of criticism, even when of defamatory nature, by government of its opponents is not deplored.

We need to remember that the ruling party and the government machinery have the most consistent and glorious record of violating the Constitution or, at least, those parts of the Constitution which promise certain minimum rights to the citizens of the country. Was the storming of the Golden Temple constitutional? Was the manner of holding elections in Assam constitutional? Is booth capturing, which the ruling party does routinely, constitutional? Is it constitutional to raise crores of rupees to fill Congress party coffers, by giving contracts to foreign arms manufacturing firms in return for underhand commission? Is the continuing army rule in states of the North East, constitutional? Is the routine functioning of the police and the bureaucracy always constitutional? Was the massacre of the Sikhs in November 1984 constitutional? Yet some of the leaders responsible for that

massacre are still luminaries of the ruling party and have been returned to power 'within the framework of the Constitution'. The ruling party tries to use the Constitution like the golden touch of Midas to transform injustice into justice.

Merely because a criminal uses money and the power of the State machinery to get elected, he does not become less of a criminal, even though the government would like us to believe he does. The list of such violations is endless. And yet it is assumed that those in power are wedded to upholding the Constitution simply because they are in power.

By the same logic, anyone who opposes the power of the ruling party is accused of subverting the Constitution. By a strange variety of doubletalk, the ruling party is identified with the nation and opposition to the party in power is seen as subversion of national unity. Even those sections of the Akalis who have asked for nothing more than reorganising of Centre-State relations aceording to the federal principles laid down in the Constitution are accused of being antinational. In reality, the concentration of powers in the Centre, as attempted by Indira and Rajiv Gandhi, could much more appropriately be termed 'subverting the Constitution'.

Despite the trappings of democracy that we live with today, to be in power is to be in another category altogether from the rest of the citizens. This is an important factor responsible for the increasing criminalisation of politics in this country, which emanates from the top. It has also led to the dangerous near-deification of certain individuals and identification of them with that mystic entity—'the nation'.

When responding to the conflict between the Akalis and the government, we would do well to remember the following:

That we should not reduce the conflict to the naivete of a Bombay film formula. There is a strong tendency to see the government and its leaders as the heroes of the story and the Akalis as the villains who need to be reformed or exterminated. The Akalis have indeed made irresponsible mistakes and are paying for it. But the government and the ruling party have committed disastrous blunders, all too deliberately, and they are making others pay for it. It is, therefore, important not to see the government as the impartial, justice dispensing authority but rather to understand that it is part of the problem.

That the Akali party is not a monolithic monster. It speaks with many different voices, and a Longowal cannot be held accountable for the beliefs of a Chohan just as every Hindu cannot be held accountable for the sayings and doings of a Golwalker or a Congressman.

That every Sikh is not an Akali and cannot be held accountable for the lapses of the Akali leadership just as many Hindus would not like to be punished for the lapses of Rajiv Gandhi merely because he happens to be a Hindu.

That we should not use different standards for judging the conduct of the government and that of the ordinary citizens. Killings by terrorists need to be stopped and condemned. But we need to be equally alert in condemning government-sponsored killings. Just because the government uses the army and the police to kill and torture, it does not become any the less reprehensible. Therefore, let us not find justifications for army action in Punjab or killing of innocent Sikhs during the November riots. Teaching of such 'lessons' will criminalise our social and political life in more serious ways than the activity of ordinary criminals can ever do.

Instead of using the Constitution or the nation as the measure of all things, we would do will to remember that nothing is more valuable than human life, dignity or freedom. To preserve and expand these are the only enduring touchstones of action.

That the idea of national unity is often used as a dangerous trap. The nation is only a political entity and not a God-given permanent creation. The nation's boundaries keep changing, and enduring unity amongst people can never be achieved by guns and use of force. It is far more important to emphasise the well-being and peaceful coexistence of different communities rather than to be ready to destroy human life in the name of the nation's unity.

One Man Against A Mafia

In Agra his name is enough to send shivers down the spines of hardened pimps of city's red light areas.

That is Dr R. S. Sodhi, the medical practitioner who has been operating his clinic in the ill-reputed Tilak Bazar of Agra. The area is famous for two things —the brothels upstairs and Dr Sodhi's clinic in the —Main Bazar. One can see the turbaned doctor consoling a new entrant into the business and ever ready to plan for her rescue from the clutches of heartless gangsters of flesh trade.

Dr. R.S. Sodhi

Sixty-three-year old Dr Sodhi shifted to Agra from what is now Pakistan at the time of partition, armed with his degree in medicine and a youthful zeal to do something for his less unfortunate brethren in the society.

Soon Dr Sodhi came to know Mrs Rameshwari Nehru, wife of Mr Brij Lal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru's first cousin. The association grew stronger with Mrs Nehru asking Dr Sodhi to open a branch of Association for Social Health in India. That was in 1948 and since then Dr Sodhi has been the general secretary of association's Agra branch.

"In the beginning our efforts to rescue girls from the city's redlight area were resented by friends and relatives," Dr Sodhi said. "But attitudes soon began to change and some of my staunch supporters now include those very friends who had criticised our initial efforts."

Dr Sodhi and his associates in Agra have rescued over 2200 girls since 1972 when the Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act (SITA) came into being. A large number of girls have been married and are leading a happy family life, Dr Sodhi said. "They come to us in Agra and keep in touch through letters."

However, Dr Sodhi shot into prominence in 1981 through a letter he had written to the editor of *Indian Express* about the inhuman conditions in Agra Protective Home, where a large number of women were detained for years without any charge or offence.

Two public-spirited senior law teachers of Delhi University Dr Upendra Baxi and Mrs Lotika Sarkar read the letter which was published in the *Indian Express* of April 6, 1981 and filed a writ petition in Supreme Court.

The writ petition stirred the court and the sustained efforts by Mr Baxi and Mrs Sarkar assisted by Dr Sodhi had resulted in revolutionary changes in the Agra Protective Home. The place was spruced up and all the girls who were being held there illegally were released and sent to their homes.

The crusade of Dr Sodhi has not ended. "The recent escape of 51 inmates from Lucknow peotective home in May," Dr Sodhi said, "is a proof of deplorable and horrid conditions in these homes."

He said in the Agra home, with which he had been closely associated. it was found that 90 per cent of the 50 girls detained there had contracted venereal diseases or were on the verge of insanity. "This is what we run these homes for," Dr Sodhi asks.

He said these homes which were governed by some provisions of the SITA, were being grossly misused and had become dens where the unfortunate victims were exploited both socially, and physically and sexually.

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Letters to the Editor

PANTHIC UNITY

Sir,—Dr Rajinder Kaur, President, Istri Akali Dal, has rightly pleaded for unity in the Sikh Panth which is, undoubtedly, the need of the hour. Every well-meaning Sikh is equally concerned over the present 'disunity' in the Panth. It was expected that the formation of a 9-member Ad hoc Committee, including the highly educated/talented selfless Sikhs on the one hand and, on the other, the existing top Akali leaders as well as the representatives of the Sikh 'youth', would forge unity in the Panth. But, unfortunately, it turned out to be otherwise. Let the Akali leadership not stand on false prestige and unite into one Akali Dal, without which not much can be achieved for the Community. The trouble with the Sikh Community is that quite a number of them have become a 'purchaseable commodity' on various counts, may be lust for office, fame/chaudhar or money. A 'true' Sikh is supposed to be above all such temptations: Once that character is developed and maintained, there should be no reason for any disunity in the Panth.

We need selfless and devoted leaders like Nawab Kapur Singh who would prefer 'service to the Community' to the office of Nawabi. Once the traditional leadership adopts that attitude, i.e. to 'serve the Panth', nothing would be difficult to achieve unity. Let the two main Akali Dals, viz. 'that of Longowal' and the 'United Akali Dal' of Baba Joginder Singh sit together and resolve their differences across the table. There should be no justifiation for the old Akali leader ship to stick on to office, once they know that they have failed to deliver the goods. Let the Sikh intelligentsia and the Ex-servicemen join hands to force the two to come into one. It would have been worthwhile to try the leadership now!

It would be in the interest of the country as a whole and the Government too not to play one Dal against the other as 'disunity' among the Sikhs will not lead to any permanent solution to the Punjab problem. After all, the aims & objects and demands of the two Dals are more or less the same. A decision with one of the two may not be acceptable to the other. The Government and the Sikhs would like to have an 'everlasting' solution to the problem rather than a 'patch up' one!

—Gurdial Singh
Ludhiana

Why single out the Sikhs ?

Sir,—The oft-repeated argument is that Operation Bluestar was inevitable as there was no alternative left. Though this is a debatable point, yet one might have concurred with this line of thinking if it had finished the terrorist problem or solved the Punjab tangle. But all it succeeded in doing was to exterminate just a couple of hundred terrorists. At the same time it killed hundreds of innocent pilgrims including members of SGPC staff, not to speak of the destruction of bazaars and houses in the vicinity of the Golden Temple along with many of their inmates. The subsequent harassment and torture of the Sikh, especially the youth, have resulted only in creating more terrorists. So the question arises, was Operation Bluestar worth it? Hasn't it further complicated the Punjab problem? Already the feeling among political analysts seems to be growing that it was an ill-timed, arrogant blunder of Himalayan dimensions.

One does feel horrified at the killings of innocent people and we condemn these mad acts of terrorists in the strongest possible terms. But we shouldn't overlook the fact that such innocent victims also happen to be Sikhs.

Two examples will show whether Sikh grievances of hurt feelings are real or imaginary. A judicial inquiry into the November riots was ordered only in April 1985 and the inquiry commission has not yet started functioning. Secondly, if one Lal Singh is suspected to be involved in the Air India Jumbo crash, some 30 Lal Singhs are questioned in Bombay (*Indian Express* June 27).

Official spokesmen say that there is no harassment of Sikhs anywhere. Perhaps they have not travelled in buses and trains in the northern part of the country where only Sikhs are singled out for search and are rudely treated.

—H. S. Hanspal
New Delhi

Ordeal of the telephone subscribers

Sir,—With the onset of the monsoon season the annual ordeal of the telephone subscribers will begin again. The name of the malady is "dead telephones" This occurrence is inevitable unless the basic faults the system suffers from are removed.

The 104-year-old telephone system in India has become technologically outdated. Although the authorities have realised this, they are persisting with a piecemeal approach to its modernisation which will create more problems than it has. The reported drastic cut in the Seventh Plan outlay shows that the Planning Commission has still not appreciated the importance of telecommuncation.

The virtual collapse of the Indian Airlines computer reservation system, mostly due to fraquent failures of the telecommunication network, is only the forerunner of similar crises in other fields of public work. Nothing short of a total and immediate modernisation of the system, as was done in France in 1975, is called for. Resource is not a constraint, but political and bureaucratic will or vision is. The public has to generate it by raising a hue and cry about the inadequacies of the present telecommunications network.

As far as the functioning of the Telephones Department is concerned, the problems stem from negative management. Once again, only sustained public pressure can lead to improved management.

The Government department's form or structure has outlived its utility. An autonomous corporation might help improve the functioning of the telephone system. In this case too, a weak effort at forming corporations in a few selected cities will not help. The entire system should be placed under an autonomous and independent corporation. The employees of the proposed corporation, financial institutions and members of the public should be allowed to hold 49 per cent shares in it.

The real obstacle in the way of the Government in accepting such a proposal is the vested interest of politicians whose enormous powers and patronage in the present arrangement will be seriously and effectively curtailed. The question is: will our politicians sacrifice their selfish interests for the common good of the people?

The anti-consumer attitude of the personnel of the Telephones Department too needs to be changed by telling the staff repeatedly that the people are the real masters who are entitled to better service than is provided to them at present.

—M.R. Pai
Bombay

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Janata Party seeks more power for states

The Janata Party has demanded constitutional changes for devolution of administrative and financial powers "not only from the Centre to States but right upto the Panchayat level in tune with the spirit of federalism," according to a memorandum presented by it to the Sarkaria Commission.

Releasing the text of the memorandum at a Press conference in New Delhi last week, Janata Parliamentary party leader Madhu Dandavate who was also the convener of the committee which drafted it, said that the party also wanted the discretion given to Governor and President to withhold assent to Bills passed by State legislatures should be curtailed.

Asked what would happen if the State Cabinet took a wrong decision or went against the guarantees given to minority groups. Mr Dandavate said that in such cases while his party wanted the Governor not to withhold assent, it also wanted to fight the wrong steps politically.

The Janata Party has also demanded that where a State Cabinet had lost majority on the floor of the House, its recommendation to dissolve the House should not be accepted. It should be decided on the floor of the House.

Mr Dandavate also mentioned the National Expenditure Commission to go into expenditure pattern of the Centre and States and inclusion of profits from administered prices in the divisible pool.

The Janata leader said that his party would oppose any move to deny States the right to take overdrafts. He wanted that the scope for discrimination between States in regard to overdraft should be eliminated.

Yet another major innovation to the Janata memorandum is that the Planning Commission should be concerned only with core sector allocation leaving the States to determine their own priorities in allocations. This would make the planning process really decentralised and responsive to local needs, the party contended.

The memorandum was drafted by a committee consisting of, besides Mr Dandavate, Karnataka Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde, former MPs Era Sezhian and Ravindra Varma and Andhra Janata ehief P. Babul Reddy, in the light of discussions that took place in Tamil Nadu recently.

Prof. Dandavate said some of the existing provisions of the Constitution have given a free hand to the executive to make inroads into the legislative powers of the States. He said Articles 31A, 31C and 304(B) provide ample scope for such encroachments by the Centre.

"These provisions must be carefully examined and necessary amendments made in the Constitution to protect the powers of the State," he said.

Referring to the administrative relation between the Centre and the States, the Janata Party leader said a number of Central agencies and organisations like the Agricultural Prices Commission, Central Water Commission and Food Corporation of India handle affairs relating to subjects in the State and concurrent list of the seventh schedule of the Constitution.

The memorandum suggested setting up of an inter-State council to help settle inter-State and Centre-State disputes. Though there is a clear constitutional provision for setting up of such a council, this has not been done and many disputes have remained unsettled for a long period, resulting in tension.

As regarding financial relations, the memorandum demanded settling up of a National Credit Council consisting of representatives of the Central and the State Governments at the ministerial level to deal with the problems of institutional finance. It said that the problem of resources allocation to the States must be viewed in a "wider and more comprehensive" perspective. It wanted income tax, including tax on companies, to be shared by the Centre and the States.

Lok Sabha Speaker Inaugurates Master Tara Singh Birth Centenary

Shri Balram Jakhar, Speaker, Lok Sabha paid rich trbutes to Master Tara Singh for his meritorious services to the country and Sikh community with unstinting faith in secularism. He also quoted extensively from Gurbani and Urdu poetry to bring out the richness of Punjabi culture with relevant to contribution of Maharaja Ranjit Singh as a secular ruler. Shri Jakhar was speaking last week at the inaugural function organised by Shiromani Akali Dal (Master Tara Singh) under the presidentship of Prof. Harbans Singh to mark the birth centenary of Master Tara Singh. Shri Barkat Punjabi recited a poem on the occasion.

13 States yet to reply Sarkaria's questionnaire

Mr Justice R.S. Sarkaria is not sure about completing the work of the Centre-State relations commission by the scheduled time in June next year in view of the lukewarm response he has encountered from as many as 13 states.

Talking to newsmen in Bhubaneswar last week, he said that certain State governments appeared ignorant about the "rung of protection" provided in the Constitution for development of tribal areas.

Talking about the complaints of several states about the action of the Centre in departing from the recommendations of the Finance Commission, he said that the Centre should furnish an explanatory memorandum to parliament in this regard. But such demands are voiced in parliament, he said and added, "why does the parliament not take interest".

Mr Justice Sarkaria who visited nine states said that 13 State governments have not even returned the questionnaires sent to them for their opinion on Centre-State relations.

He then elaborated some of the difficulties faced by the commission. Some of Government-run institutions which had been assigned the task of researching on different topics are behind schedule. The institutions have their own problems like getting information and statistics from the administration.

Mr Justice Sarkaria regretted that at times the administration has even tried to hold back information on the plea that they are classified. The commission's work has also suffered because of the elections and "then, some chief ministers fell ill", he said.

Talking about complaints regarding indifference of the Centre to development of backward tribal areas, he said that the Constitution empowers a state government to obtain a mandate against the Centre if it approves a tribal development scheme and then refuses to fund it. "But nobody bothers about this provison," he lamented.

Mr Justice Sarkaria who appeared bitter about the lukewarm response from State Governments in the work of the commission, pointed out that some State governments have submitted their memoranda just a few days before the commission panel visited this States. The left little time with the panel to study the memorandum and then hold interviews in the State capitals.

G.S. Randhir Bereaved

Sardar Harnam Singh, Supdt. A.G. Office, Lahore (Retd.) and father of Sardar G.S. Randhir, Special Correspondent "National Herald", expired in New Delhi on 3rd July, 1985. He was 98. He is survived by his son and four daughters.

The *Antim Ardas Bhog* ceremony will be held on the July 13 at 5 p.m. at Gurdwara Singh Sabha, Rajouri Garden, New Delhi.

Health and Hygiene

Identifying genes to check ailments

By : Guriqbal Singh

"But, why me, doctor? Why not others?", exclaims a factory worker when told that he was suffering from "emphysema" —a chronic lung disease. Why one person has to bear the wrath of a wretched disease while another also exposed to the same conditions and environment does not? The is the main question confronting medicine today.

The poser is important because the present-day diseases, various types of cancers, emphysemas and heart problems seem to strike almost at random. Until recently, the physicians used to shrug their shoulders and say "perhaps it runs in the family." Thereby confusing even more as no one else in the family caught the same disease.

But, now after intensive research of more than 28 years, the question "Why me" can often be answered—the culprit is genes internal blueprint of an individual.

Genes never act alone, instead they are always influenced by the environment. In every single illness the equation is the same—disease occurs when an environmental insult meets genetic predisposition or when environmental and genetic factors combine. And, if we can uncover both sets of factors we can certainly answer querry "why me." Moreover, if we can test for the presence of genetic factor before a disease strikes, we can definitely pinpoint who is at risk and from what (environment).

The genes can alert us in advance to the probability that a disease is imminent. And, forearmed. Our newly found ability to read the secrets of genes is revolutionising the medical prognostication, called genetic prophecy.

The West has already become "gene-conscious." They have realised the importance of genetic prophecy and counselling, which till recently was limited to prenatal screening to determine the possibility of an unborn baby having any birth defects. It is fast becoming a necessary element in health management techniques because "prevention is better than cure' is becoming the watch word of modern medicine.

The popularity and credibility of such clinics are being established as they are coming out with perfect prognostication about a patient's future health and spelling out factors which can make him or her fall sick and carefully devising do's and don'ts for avoiding major illness.

Those who come to these clinics undergo some basic tests required for genetic screening. First they provide a sample of blood, urine and a tine swatch of skin. And when the patients return to the clinic on an appointed day a genetic counsellor sits with them and explains the test results. The tests can reveal a great deal about their genetic health. On the basis of other tests, workers may find out whether they are vulnerable to certain chemicals in their environment, patients may discover if they are susceptible to specific drugs and the merely curious may learn that they carry a whole host of genetic traits that bear directly on the way they live. The tests can help people make decisions on the kinds of work they can safely do, the ways they might live, the foods they might eat: all on the basis of what the genes reveal. Still, this screening is only tiny aspect of the ability of the genes to foretell the future.

The counsellors themselves are crucial to this process as they are the first contact that most people have with what may be the most profoundly personal of all the biological revolution. They in fact, are the translators of the vital secrets of genes.

The most important element in genetic prophecy is genetic markers. Actually, they are the key which can unlock the secret and dark world of diseases resulting in correct genetic prediction.

The theory behind genetic markers is simple that all diseases have genetic components. If we can learn what they (genetic components) are and can test for them, we can find out who is susceptible to what disease.

However, the process is more difficult in practice. The day is not far when genetic engineering will allow us to identify each of our genes directly. In fact, researchers have already devised ways and tests which can isolate genes for a few diseases like sickle-cell anemia. But still we are a long way from being able to use that kind of clinical analysis of all our genes on a regular basis.

If genes cannot yet be easily identified, however, their byproducts (markers) can be. The easy identification of genes' byproducts has proved a great help. And, that is the secret of genetic prophecy. A genetic marker is the recognisable characteristic by which we can detect the existence of a gene as each functioning gene helps produce a single distinctive protein. Scientists can use these proteins as markers, identifying them analysing their characteristics and discovering how they influence our responses to environments. Ultimately, they can identify the original gene simply by looking at its byproduct.

Genetic prophecy is already here Research is progressing at a breathtaking pace; markers found in the laboratory just months ago are already being introduced into clinical practice.

For medical treatment in general, the influence of genetic markers will continue to grow. Every time we uncover the genetic components of a particular disease, we take another step towards learning to control it. As such genetic prophecy will help us to treat the causes, and not merely the symptoms, of diseases that have resisted treatment in the past.

Worldwide Action Against Glaucoma

An organisation helping to combat worldwide ignorance about glaucoma is planning to step up its information service to other countries.

Glaucoma is a disease which can lead to blindness through the build-up of fluid within the eyeball. Eleven years ago, eye specialists, medical workers and sufferers got together with support from the pharmaceutical industry to form the International Glaucoma Association (IGA). Today the IGA has 4,000 members, who seek to exchange information in countries as diverse as India, Australia, Belgium and the United States.

In April, the Association conducted a National Action Week in Britain to persuade those most at risk to go for screening, or seek medical advice if they are concerned about their eyes.

Glaucoma comes in two forms —acute, in which case the patient would be in no doubt that something is wrong because of the pain, and chronic, the insidious type, which can develop without noticeable symptoms.

In Britain, it is estimated that of the 250,000 sufferers from the chronic form, less than half are aware of their condition. But the prevalence of glaucoma in many countries, particularly in the developing world, is believed to be much higher.

Treatment for glaucoma sufferers is by drugs to reduce the pressure of fluid on the optic nerve or through an operation on the iris to allow better fluid drainage.

IGA chairman Ronald Crick, and ophthalmic surgeon, said glaucoma was responsible for the blindness of one in every eight of the 130,000 patients on the blind register in England and Wales.

Although more needs to be done in Britain to combat glaucoma' with the support of its members, the IGA hopes to do much more to fight the disease overseas.

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Released Sikh Detenus Must Be Properly Rehabilitated And Compensated

Government And Sikh Organisations Have Vital Role To Play

Waking up from its deep slumber of more than a year, the Punjab government, upon a signal from the centre, has embarked upon the policy of releasing in batches Sikhs detained under various cooked-up charges and without trial.

According to varied official announcements, these men and women were not guilty of any serious crime like "arson, dacoity, murder or sedition". They had been hauled up on mere suspicion. Most of them were below 25 years of age and still studying in a school or college. Their only fault was that they were members of All-India Sikh Students Federation which was then a legitimate body like Indian Students Congress, All-India Students Federation, Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad and other student bodies sponsored by various political parties.

When a ban was imposed upon AISSF, its members were rounded up en masse. Somuchso there were more than 7,000 of them behind bars at one time.

Other young men and women were shut behind bars merely because they were devout Sikhs, either wearing the five religious symbols (Kakkas) prescribed by their faith or donning black, blue or saffron turbans or dupattas.

To stick to religious symbols could not described by any stretch of imagination as either crime or sin. Same principle has to be applied to the attire. By arresting these youth, the government had trampled under feet the sacred clauses of the constitution which guarantee freedom of worship.

Now the government has confessed that all of them were innocent.

Since the government has been guilty of misusing its draconian powers for maltreating, torturing and incarcerating innocent persons over such a long period, it must make amends.

Most of these youth have now lost at least one or two years of their studies. Others have lost their jobs. And their former employers would be reluctant to hire them again, as they carry on their forehead the stigma of alleged anti-national activities.

In other words, their careers are now in jeopardy. Since our government claims to work for the welfare of the people, it is its bounden duty to rush to their rescue and ensure that they go back to their old educational institutions or jobs.

Also full compensation must be paid for the financial loss they have been made to suffer for no fault of their own.

The SGPC and Shiromani Akali Dal as well as other Sikh organisations and industrial houses must also glue their attention to this problem. They can help relieve the distress of these unfortunate members of the community.

AKALIS ARE ALWAYS WILLING FOR AN HONOURABLE SETTLEMENT

(*Continued from first page*)

Under Mrs Gandhi's dispensation, Abohar-Fazilka was to go to Haryana along with the settlement of various territorial claims and counter-claims by a commission of linguistic experts, taking contiguity and language actually spoken as the sole criteria and village as a unit.

Now Mr Gandhi wants that Chandigarh's merger with Punjab and transfer of Abohar-Fazilka to Haryana should be "preferably simultaneous." This is an entirely new posture. He has torn to pieces his own mother's verdict.

It is wrong that Akalis made new demands after the government has unilaterally accepted religious demands, as Mr Gandhi would have the world believe. The political and economic demands were very much there since 1947 and, more particularly, since 1966.

Mr Gandhi boasts to have accepted all religious demands. But none of them has been implemented. The acceptance is merely on paper for show. An all-India gurdwara legistation, which would bring all historic gurdwaras in the country under SGPC jurisdiction, is nowhere on the horizon.

It is fallacious for Mr Gandhi to say that Akalis have been increasing their demands. In fact, these have been reduced. At the outset Akalis made 45 demands but then, in parleys with the government during 1981-84 they insisted on only 10.

At present there is no Akali Morcha. Then which Morcha Mr Gandhi wants the Akalis to "withdraw?"

Moreover, Akalis were forced to launch their Morcha in August 1982 as a last resort because Mrs Gandhi refused to lend any ear to Akalis pleas for justice and fairplay to Punjab and Sikhs. The 26 meetings which Akalis had at various levels with the government, were just latter's manoeuvres to gain time. As opposition leaders are witnesses, once an agreement was reached on all issues but Mrs Gandhi, for reasons known to her, backed out at the last moment.

Mr Gandhi, like his mother, believes in tiring the Akalis out into abject surrender. He proclaims to the world he is "ever ready" to come to a settlement with Akalis but, in actuality, does nothing.

During his foreign tours in May and June this year, he promised to consult opposition leaders about Punjab on his return to India. But he has made no effort in this direction.

Mr Gandhi talks vociferously about "concessions" made by the government.

If the Punjab government is now releasing "innocent" Sikhs rounded up en mass, it is not a concession but merely an act of undoing the wrong perpetrated on these persons.

Government's decision to order a probe into anti-Sikh riots in the Indian capital is also no concession. Whenever some lives were lost in the past anywhere in the country, a judicial inquiry was ordered immediately. Here Mr Gandhi tarried for several months before doing the needful. Now he stubbornly refuses to extend the probe's scope to other cities.

Why ?

He does not want the world to know the dimensions and magnitude of the carnage and pillage the Sikhs were subjected to.

Instead of accusing the Akalis of intransigence, Mr Gandhi should shed his own foibles and prejudices and extend the hand to friendship to Akalis with sincerity. He will then find that Akalis are only too willing to meet him more than half the way. Rhetorics are no substitute for statesmanship which is crying need of the hour.

Will Mr Gandhi rise to the occasion and prevent another confrontation ?

It is a million-dollar question.

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